
CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



Tulare Unit

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Arrest Made In Connection With Fires That Killed Pilot, Firefighter In Plane Crash

Visalia – State and federal investigators have arrested a 29-year-old Tulare man on homicide and arson charges, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection announced today. Investigators with CDF and the United States Forest Service arrested Patrick Courtney in connection to three September fires that burned in a remote canyon above Springville known as the Bear Creek Drainage. An OV-10A air tactical aircraft working on the fires for CDF crashed September 6, 2006 and took the lives of CDF Battalion Chief Rob Stone and Pilot Sandy Willett.

”I commend the efforts of the joint investigation team working diligently on the case,” said Unit Chief Ed Wristen. “The deaths of Chief Stone and Pilot Willett have been very difficult for both of our agencies, the community and the families and friends of our fallen firefighters. We are looking forward to bringing this incident to a close.”

Questions related to this case are being referred to the Tulare County District Attorney’s Office.

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